Resources has identified 30 links for preparation of feasibility report for river link project and has completed feasibility reports of 8 links after carrying out field surveys and investigations. The feasibility studies, *prima facie,* are to establish the technical feasibility of the link proposals on the ground through field surveys & investigations.

(d) and (e) The Union Government has set up a Task Force in December, 2002 to suggest, *inter-alia* modalities for project funding etc. The Task Force is required to submit an Action Plan giving alternative option for funding and suggested methods of cost recovery.

Water Deficit River Basins

1538. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to data available with his Ministry eight of the twenty river basins are water deficit threatening the lives and livelihoods of over 200 million people and whether this trend is on the increase; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI) BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) As per international criteria, a situation of annual per capita availability of water of less than 1000 cubic metre is considered as scarcity condition. According to this criteria, nine of the twenty river basins are water scarce and it is estimated that a population of over 200 million people live in these nine basins.

(b) The Government has proposed transfer, of surplus water from surplus basins/areas to water deficit basins/areas through inter linking of rivers for optimal utilisation of water resources of the country. Besides, storage capacity is also being created through construction of dams, tanks and other water harvesting structures including roof top rainwater harvesting.

Utilization of Ground Water

1539. DR. K. KASTURIRANGAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) what is the progress made in utilization of ground water prospect